lived under it had no illusions as to its harshness. The first step which the peasant who had saved a little money took was to buy himself out of the obligation to work on the lord's demesne. The Peasants' Revolt in England, the *Jacquerie* in France, and the repeated risings of the German peasantry, reveal a state of social exasperation which has been surpassed i$ bitterness by few subsequent movements.

It is natural to ask (though some writers on mediaeval economics refrain from asking), what the attitude of religious opinion was towards serfdom. And it is hardly possible to answer that question except by saying that, apart from a few exceptional individuals, religious opinion ignored it. True, the Church condemned arbitrary tallages, and urged that the serf should be treated witff Tmmanity. True, it described the manumission of serfs as an act of piety, like gifts to the poor. For serfs are not " living tools/' but men ; in the eyes of God all men are^seffs* together, *conservi,* and in the Kingdom of Heaven Lazarus is before Dives.[10]* True, villeinage was a legal, not an economic, category ; in the England of the fourteenth century there were serfs who were rich men. But to release the individual is not to condemn the institution. Whatever " mad priests " might say and do, the official Church, whose wealth consisted largely of villeins, walked with cir-

cumspection. "' * *"

The canon law appears to have recognized and enforced serfdom.[10]* Few prominent ecclesiastics made any pronouncement against it. Aquinas explains it as the result of sin, but that does not prevent his justifying it on economic grounds.[101] Almost all mediaeval writers appear to assume it or excuse - it, Ecclesiastical landlords, though perhaps somewhat more conservative in their methods, seem as a whole to have been neither better nor worse than other landlords, *Rustica gens optima flens, pessima gaudens,* was a which sometimes appealed, it is to be feared.